THE GENERATION THEORY:
A CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACH

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Any modern society in the world is a sum of all generations that coexist and are active at that moment in time in this society. Changes in society partly depend on the clash of generations: a conflict of values, ambitions, expectations, attitudes and behaviors.

In the XX century, global economic and political forces, together with the effects of informational channels and communicational technologies, the increase of the world interconnectedness have faced increasing population of people in the world are affected by significant events. But facing similar situations people of the same age do not always keep to similar value systems and behavior because they are representatives of different national cultures. These national value systems together with age factor are the drivers of behavior and attitudes, and very important cultural layer that is defined in cross-cultural management.

The data collection methods include external sources such as scientific literature of various well-known authors (Karl Mannheim, Neil Howe and William Strauss, Marc Prenskyand and others) in the field of cross-cultural management, business and the generation theory, specialized online publications and statistical online data.

The methodology of the survey is based on researching and analyzing scientific literature mainly from foreign sources but also from some domestic sources which focus on the basic topics of cross-cultural management and the generation theory.

Combining the basic aspects of cross-cultural management (layers of culture and their influence on personality) with the generation theory has made it possible to identify the features of cross-cultural profiles of modern managers of different generations. The results of the survey are shown in the theoretical background and the possible practical application of the cross-cultural instruments to business activities and cross-cultural connections.

The Cambridge dictionary explains that generation is all the people of about the same age within a society or within a particular family. But there is another explanation which treats generation as the nationality of someone belonging to the first, second, third, etc. group of people of the same age in the family who have been born in that country [1].

Karl Mannheim [2] explains that "a generation is a social location that has the potential to affect an individual's consciousness in much the same way as social class and culture does". Based on the biological and social context components, "individuals who belong to the same generation, who share the same year of birth, are endowed, to that extent, with a common location in the historical dimension of the social process", and a generational creation is organized. The result of this creation is the development of "collective mentalities that mirror a dominant view of the world, reflecting similar attitudes and values and providing a basis for shared action". These collective mentalities drive to "continuing practice", which means that the significant events and values formed collectively by a particular generation group will continue to influence the individuals' behaviors, ambitions and expectations during all their lives [2].

Generations are restricted by significant politic and social events in the country (society) or region considered. But the key factor of forming each generation is the list of values that exist on the subconscious level of personality, and are formed at the age of 12 – 14 years through education, social, economic, political and technological environment. The result of this situation is slightly different dates in different regions of each generation, but together with significant global events of the XX century that tend to group mostly in similar periods.

However, in particular countries (for example the former Soviet Union republics), there are very specific moments in time when one generation ends and a new one starts.

Neil Howe and William Strauss [3] in their generation theory emphasize that "generations are formed by the way historical events and moods shape their members' lives and by the fact that these events and moods affect people very differently depending on the phase of life they occupy at the time". So that means that every new generation comes to during or after a period of national crisis, cultural renewal or awakening [3].

Neil Howe and William Strauss [3] label four main types of generations with the archetypes: prophet, nomad, hero, and artist. The generations of each archetype do not only have a similar age, geographical and historical location, but also the same values, attitudes toward family, culture, technology, communications and risk [3].

Each generation is usually about 20 years in length, the time from the birth of a group of individuals to the time they become adult and start having their own families and children. Now, in modern society there are three generations of adults: baby boomers; generation X and Y.

Basic characteristics of these three generations in the USA, Western Europe and Ukraine are systematized [3 – 6] and presented in Table 1.

Table 1

**Basic characteristics of generations:
Western Europe, USA and Ukraine**

Generation	Birthday years	Archetype	Ideology		Attitude toward technology [6]	
	Western Europe, USA	Ukraine				
Baby Boomers (winners)	1943 – 1960	1945 – 1964	Prophet	"Father Knows Best"	Early information technology adaptors	
Generation X. Unknown generation. Thirteenth generation. Generation MTV	1961 – 1981	1965 – 1985	Nomad	"Latch-key kids"	Digital immigrants	

Generation Y. Millennials. Generation Why. Generation Next	1982 – 2000	1986 – 2000	Hero???	"Network kids"	Digital Natives

According to the generational classification of archetypes offered by Neil Howe and William Strauss [3], baby boomers (winners) are a prophet generation. This generation was born after a great national crisis (or war), during a time of renewed society life and a new societal order consensus.

Prophets grow up as mostly indulged children, come of age as the narcissistic young crusaders of a spiritual awakening, cultivate principles as moralistic mid-lifers, and emerge as wise elders guiding another historical crisis [3]. Because of their place in history, prophet generations tend to be remembered for their coming-of-age interest and their principled elder management. Their primary contribution relate to social vision, basic values, and religion. Prophets designated themselves the arbiters of the national values, crowding in the teaching, religion, journalism, law, marketing, and the arts activities [3].

Baby boomers are the indulged results of postwar optimism, Tomorrow land rationalism, and family principles "Father Knows Best" [3]. In business this generation is the most stable and strongly focused on material sustainability. They are hard employees and good mentors, who prefer face-to-face meetings even in each day communications because they are early informational technology adaptors [6].

According to Neil Howe and William Strauss classification [3] generation X (Unknown generation, Thirteenth generation, generation MTV) is a Nomad generation. Representatives of this type of generation are born during a cultural renewal, the period of time when youth-fired attacks break out against the established institutional principles and social ideals. They grow up as underprotected and independent children. Because of their historical location, such generations tend to be remembered for their rising-adult years of hell-raising and their midlife years of get-it-done leadership. Their primary contribution is related to liberty, survival, and honor [3].

Generation X grew up as "latch-key kids". It was clear the adults didn't know what was going on and had also become busier. Many of the representatives of generation X have begun to construct strong families because they missed them in their childhood.

Marc Prensky [6] specifies generation X as digital immigrants. They are individuals who were born before the widespread adoption of digital technology. That is why in communications they prefer text messaging or e-mail channels.

According to the classification of generational archetypes of Neil Howe and William Strauss [3], Generation Y (Millennials, generation Why, generation Next) has to be a hero, but till now it is hard to confute this argument. Representatives of Hero generations are usually born after a spiritual awakening, during the period of individual pragmatism, self-reliance, laissez-faire, and national, sectional or ethnic chauvinism. Heroes grow up as protected children. Because of their historical location, hero generations tend to be remembered for their quiet years of rising adulthood and their midlife years of flexible, consensus building leadership. Their primary contribution is related to pluralism, expertise, and due process [3].

Marc Prensky [6] specifies generation Y as a group of digital natives who have been interacting with technology from childhood. They are opposite to digital immigrants (representatives of generation X) in their attitude toward technology. Representatives of generation Y today are all "native speakers" of the digital computer languages, video games, social networks and the Internet. That is why they prefer to do all communications online.

The key factors that are forming characteristics of the generations of adults in the XXI century of Western Europe, USA and Ukraine are summarized [3 – 5; 7 – 9] and analyzed in Table 2.

Table 2

Comparing the key factors forming the generations at the beginning of the XXI century: Western Europe, USA and Ukraine

Generation	Life experience (formation of values)		Basic values	
	Western Europe, USA	Ukraine	Western Europe, USA	Ukraine
Baby Boomers	Until 1970s. Cold War; the first space fligh		The cult of success; interest in personal growth and reward; family-orientation; postwar optimism; rationalism; leadership; power	
	Post-War boom; Vietnam; "Swinging Sixties"; Youth culture; Woodstock	Soviet "thaw"; Soviet Union empire; warranty of free uniform education; warranty of free health care	Steady; loyal; mature; the cult of youth	Collectivism; team spirit
Generation X	Until 1990s; End of Cold War; AIDS; drugs; alternative music		The ability to rely on their own strength and experience; individualism; pragmatism; global awareness; desire to learn throughout life; willingness to change	

	Fall of the Berlin Wall; Thatcherism; introduction of first PCs; early mobile technology	War in Afghanistan; perestroika; Chernobyl; total deficit	Informal views	Lack of patriotism
Generation Y	Till now. 9/11 terrorist attacks; military conflicts; SARS; development of digital technologies; social media; Google earth; era of brands		Still forming. Tech-comfortable; civic duty; moral responsibility; innocence; ability to obey; immediate reward	

Globally baby boomers are the postwar generation. This generation formed during the conquest of space and Cold War. All these formed in their distinct psychology of "winners" and made it possible to establish an interest in personal growth, leadership, optimism, the cult of success. Winners like to appeal to collective consciousness, they are able to unite people, create stable electoral groups. For them, there are no insurmountable barriers, each new barrier is a personal challenge. Winners just focus on overcoming challenges and achieving the required result, they are "workaholics". The main thing for a winner is victory, and he is not able to stop [8; 9].

Generation X in the developed countries and in Ukraine grew in radically different informational, conceptual and cultural spaces. The values of this generation in Ukraine formed in difficult times (war in Afghanistan, end of Cold War, perestroika, Chernobyl, AIDS, drugs, total deficit). The same generation in the USA and Western Europe were formed in the period of failing schools and marriages, sexual revolution, increasing number of divorces, and an R-rated popular culture, MTV and hip-hop. That is why this generation has some national differences in their behavior [8; 9].

But globally generation X was formed in the era of crises from Watergate and Vietnam to the energy crisis and the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was understandable the adults did not know what was going on and what they had to do. So their parents (boomers) sincerely believed that all the difficulties in the life of their children should make them stronger. That is why representatives of generation X had an early experience of independent life, which resulted in their independence but also personality, the ability to rely on their own strength and experience. The feature of this generation is willingness to change and flexibility as a result of the influence of political and social instability in the time of their formation. They are globalists who do not like barriers and rules and value time.

Representatives of generation X are already the greatest entrepreneurial generation in the history of the USA, their high-tech savvy and marketplace elasticity has helped the USA succeed in the era of globalization. Of all the generations born in the XX century, generation X consists of the largest share of immigrants throughout the world. Representatives of generation X have made minimum impression in civic life; they strongly believe that volunteering or helping people one-on-one is more effective than voting or working on the changing of social and political laws [3].

In business environment desire to learn throughout life and to find the most interesting work could be comparative advantage of generation X. They could be good businessmen because of their pragmatism and cynicism.

In the era of globalization Millennials are defined as the generation who was growing up after the Cold War, communicational technological progress and wireless connectivity. Representatives of this generation are living in an age of unprecedented diversity and exposure to different cultures throughout the world. They are growing up so quickly. According to their historical place most of representatives of this generation are the most protected children in history [3]. There are no big differences in values and attitudes of representatives of this generation in different countries.

Millennials as a generation have seen steady decreases in high risk behaviors. Their new culture is becoming less sharp, focussed on animated messages and famous brands, and more traditional, with rebirth of old rituals [3]. Their strong family relationships with their parents and extended families are influenced by their young adult lives.

The formation of this generation was mainly influenced by informational and digital technologies. And this generation is still being formed. Their values have started to form in the period of terrorist attacks, military conflicts, epidemics. Millennials prefer quickly achievable goals. Money for them is a way to achieve pleasures, but not a goal. Their parents (generation X) tried to compensate them for everything that they had not got in their own childhood, and as a result they want everything and immediately. They are well guided in fashion and they create fashion themselves [8; 9].

In business Millennials are characterized by: focusing on quick results and importance of self-realization; rejecting long-term goals and existence of their own ideas about career and place in society; looking for comfortable psychological climate, flexible schedule, informal communication style and entertainment component in any activity; searching for creative interesting and meaningful work with technological (digital) components [8; 9].

According to Ukrainian and European statistical data in 2015, the structure of generations of the working population is: the generation of baby boomers makes up 33 % (Western Europe) and 37 % (Ukraine); generation X amounts to 35 % (Western Europe) and 41 % (Ukraine); generation Y is 29 % (Western Europe) and 14 % (Ukraine); elder than 60 years make up 3 % (Western Europe) and 1 % (Ukraine).

So, now the key positions in the global business environment belong to the representatives of generation X. Combining the basic aspects of cross-cultural management (the layers of culture and their influence on personality) with the generation theory has made it possible to identify the features of cross-cultural profiles of modern managers of different generations. The analysis of new knowledge in this area can be a source of information for foreign firms, interested in entering the Ukrainian market.

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